

My name is Keith Gregorian-Michaelsen, I am a resident of Simsbury, and I am testifying on behalf of my son Samuel Michaelsen who is unable to advocate for himself. I am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well-being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own family.

Prior to the pandemic Samuel spent his days in a Community Work Center where he and peers did piecework for private industry and governmental agencies. That program has since shut down and Samuel is now self-directed, since his provider shut down. Staffing has been an issue throughout his time at the Community Work Center, after the pandemic started it became much worse. As the person who now manages his self-directed program I can tell you first-hand how difficult it is to find personal care providers that are willing to work for \$16.25/hour. We have had to resort to supplementing their pay in order to get and/or retain these employees. This is not a long term strategy that we will be able to maintain once my wife and I retire in the next few years.

Without your help, our state's community service delivery system will continue to shrink and our loved ones will bear the brunt of this loss. We are already experiencing the worst staffing crisis that service providers have ever seen, which has resulted in an inability to resume programs paused during COVID and caused a rebound effect for family caregivers who are unable to return to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150 million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers who care for our loved ones on a daily basis. We urge your support and ask that you add this funding to the budget before this committee.

Thanks, Keith Gregorian-Michaelsen